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## Bay ads trade flash for practical

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By Hollie Shaw

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The Hudson's Bay Company has replaced the Bay's "Shopping is good" advertising slogan, a tag line that sparked criticism from industry watchers, with a new campaign that marks a major shift in the retailer's marketing strategy.

The advertisements backing "More than you came for," a campaign launched last week, have a more transparent message – affordability – than the retailers' prior efforts. Company executives hope it will be a better reflection of the department store's personality.

Unlike the flashy "Shopping is good" campaign, the new advertisements depict the same female shopper browsing at The Bay through apparel and housewares: a preppy, time-strapped mother whose quick shopping trips are improved by the store's convenience and reasonable prices.

The ads also feature The Bay's house branded home accessories and clothing and trumpet the chain's recent "everyday low price" strategy, highlighting key items that always sell below full retail price, but never get marked down in a storewide sale.

"[The new campaign] allows us to talk about the changes that we've made at The Bay in a more dynamic kind of way than before," said Gordon Sonnenberg, senior vice-president of marketing at the chain.



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The television ads mark the first shift in marketing strategy for The Bay since Mr. Sonnenberg took over for marketing guru Neil Fedun, the architect behind the “Shopping is Good,” who left abruptly last March.

But some industry experts wonder if the new tag line lacks the punch to engage the imagination of fickle consumers.

They say Canada’s oldest retailer should concentrate on conveying excitement and uniqueness rather than spelling out its marketing position and the characteristics of its target customer.

“One mantra in advertising is ‘telling isn’t selling,’” said Karen Leiter, executive vice-president of Scott Thornly & Co.

“The bigger challenge is to get busy people to think about going to department stores, and The Bay is not figuring that out. They are getting into someone’s personal expression through fashion, which should give rise to emotion, but I don’t see any emotionally engaging proposition here.”

The Bay, whose sales slipped 1.3% to \$2.67-billion last year, suffered in a price war and saw its sales at stores open for more than a year – a benchmark of retail performance – drop 4.8%.

Ted Matthews, founder of Toronto-based marketing consultancy Brand Coach, believes The Bay’s primary marketing flaw is spreading an inconsistent message.

“The biggest threat to a brand is when well-intentioned new people come in and drop an old campaign,” he said. “The Bay never had enough time to bring meaning to “Shopping is Good.” The old campaign may have been criticized, but people were just getting used to it.”

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